Annex to the letter dated 14 July 2000 from the Alternate Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

of the independent Feasibility Study for

the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS)

Commissioned by

The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)

Conducted by

Telecom/Telematique, Inc.

Washington, DC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Feasibility study for the Gender Awareness In formation and Networking System (GAINS)

The Feasibility Study for INSTRAW regarding establishing and implementing the new GAINS system has been conducted by Telecom/Telematique Inc. of Washington, D.C. during January - March, 2000. Our findings on the proposed Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS) are summarized here and elaborated in our draft report.

Our conclusions are that transitioning INSTRAW's program of collaborative research and training on women to the global electronic network is both feasible and essential. The imperative of utilizing Information and Communications Technologies (ICT's) in global enterprises for knowledge generation, management and dissemination is now well demonstrated in the private and public sectors. INSTRAW has the support and cooperation of its partners and stakeholders, and the commitment of ICT providers, to insure that GAINS can be effectively and efficiently built and operated from Santo Domingo, interconnecting researchers and trainers with users in every region and any country. INSTRAW can utilize the power of this proven technology and rapidly expanding access to restructure its research and training operations to be global, collaborative, interactive, and cost-effective. GAINS will accelerate the spread, the use and benefits of ICTs for women and the worldwide gender initiatives, building on the pioneering work of its partners in UNDP, UNIFEM, DAW, and others and in the NGO community to use the Internet, WomenWatch, and ICTs in preparation for Beijing Plus 5.

In conducting this Feasibility Study on GAINS, Telecom/Telematique Inc. consultants, Lynne Gallagher, Noreene Janus, Carol Leimas, and Harold Moore, met with stakeholders and partners, and with experts and representatives in the ICT industry, in New York, Washington, and Santo Domingo. There is commitment on the part of key partners to cooperate closely on the development and operation of the GAINS network

GAINS on its part will contribute to the partners' missions both on the ground such as providing supporting research and training to UNIFEM's field operations or policy options and research analysis to DAW. These are strategic partnerships that will maximize gender mainstreaming in international development.

Teaming arrangements and close cooperation with UNDP will enable GAINS to build its network and operation using the technical expertise and field experience of the Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP). INSTRAW will also cooperate closely with the newly launched Electronic Platform for Learning portal of UNDP, using the infrastructure and methodologies and bringing content expertise on gender issues in development and gender mainstreaming. The synergies that will be created in the cooperation and collaboration with INSTRAW's partners in the U.N. body will insure GAINS economic, technical and institutional feasibility, and it will contribute gender expertise in research and in training from INSTRAW's global network.

Funding of GAINS is being kick-started by commitments received already from industry providers in the Dominican Republic as well as by the Government's significant financial contributions to INSTRAW. Technical expertise and other in-kind contributions from the ICT community will significantly reduce costs and increase the output and reach of GAINS. The required funding to launch and operate GAINS, produce and manage the content, and conduct the interactive global collaboration and consultations will be less than US$ 1 million per year. Preliminary discussions with funders suggest that the financial support to enable this program will be forthcoming.

Our findings in this Feasibility Study support a plan to launch GAINS in 2000 and to immediately take advantage of the opportunities presented by the momentum of Beijing Plus 5 to announce GAINS, begin building the network of users and beneficiaries, and to demonstrate the prototype in June 2000. Our key findings include:

1. The objectives of GAINS are to provide a delivery system for researchers to collaborate and disseminate their work and for trainers to collaborate and deliver training and capacity building to women. GAINS will build and produce the knowledge with this system; it will manage and disseminate this knowledge to stakeholders, users and beneficiaries. It will provide "one-stop-shopping" for research produced by the GAINS networked, virtual Think Tank and Workshop where INSTRAW researchers, partners, Focal Points and clients work collaboratively to produce and disseminate their work.

2. Stakeholders will benefit from GAINS by realizing their specific missions more effectively. Researchers' productivity will be enhanced and their network of peers in many countries expanded. Trainers will have a resource base and delivery system to conduct targeted, timely training and capacity building to women in developing countries. Policy makers and practitioners will be informed by the research results, supporting action research into effective national policies and practices. NGO's and women's groups will be enabled and supported by access to critical knowledge, tools, materials, training courses, and guidance for projects and community organizing. The women at the grass roots will benefit directly from the impact of GAINS and the delivery chain that ends at the local level.

3. GAINS Services will be 1) a comprehensive, searchable, interactive database on gender-related research and training; 2) the actual conduct and production of collaborative research and knowledge generation by networked professional researchers worldwide; and 3) access to and delivery of training and capacity building over the GAINS network.

4. Tools of GAINS used by these services will include the Web site and pages, portal services for gender research and training, free e-mail services, chatrooms, discussion forum, video conferencing and full service multimedia conferencing.

groupware for collaborative research, on-line publishing with .pdf, a gender-sensitive internal search engine, searchable database and low-bandwidth access support, and access to translation software on the Web site.

5. Partnering and Teaming will include many UN organizations as well as teaming arrangements with 1) communications network providers and ICT experts, 2) on-line training and distance learning providers, 3) research institutions working on gender and gender-related issues, and 4) INSTRAW's network of national and regional Focal Points.

6. Connectivity and access to the GAINS network will be provided to and through all Focal Points through various means, depending on the extent of network build-out and service in each country. Focal Points will re-package and disseminate the materials using appropriate media and strategies to reach grass-roots women.

Our assessment of GAINS feasibility is that it is clearly technically feasible and with the appropriate support will be economically feasible. The technology is at hand with commitments of partners to assist in designing, developing, building, and operating GAINS from the Santo Domingo headquarters. It is economically feasible if sufficient funding is provided to finance the content experts and technical experts to operate the interactive, collaborative system and program. The costs of the actual network operation will be modest. The investment to be made is in creating and managing the content and operating the delivery system.

Our recommendations to operationalize GAINS are to build the Web site and deploy the tools in cooperation with partners at UNDP and the industry. This should begin as soon as initial funding is secured. It should be possible to introduce the program and the prototype site at Beijing Plus 5 in June 2000, so as to create widespread understanding for the gender leadership in every country of what GAINS will provide. It is important not to miss this opportunity to start the collaborative process with policy-makers in all countries.

The Implementation Plan outlines the strategy, a work schedule, critical path, timeline, and cost estimates. The Start-Up phase to build the network and Web site will be Year One. Phase I will be creation of the database and design of the prototype Web site. Phase II will focus on collecting the research in progress and establishing teams of collaborative researchers and getting them on-line. Phase III will focus on site support and adding functionality. Throughout all phases, GAINS will build and connect its network of stakeholders.

Cost estimates for Year One Start-up are US$779,970. This covers the network costs, hardware, software, applications, installation, and systems development costs for less than US$500,000. The balance will support the key experts to design and develop the content and launch the interactive, collaborative program.

Recurring costs for Year Two and beyond are estimated to be US$770,198 each year as the GAINS programs expands in content, projects, stakeholders, users and beneficiaries. These costs cover network connectivity costs, applications, systems development and maintenance costs, and GAINS management as well as expanded use of content experts for implementing the research and training programs on-line.

Evaluation of GAINS is recommended to measure the main questions of the success of the program, its goals, effectiveness, and cost-benefit analysis. This evaluation will draw upon significant new data gathered by monitoring network use. It will inform both future GAINS operations but also other UN development programs and applications of ICT.

This Executive Summary of our Feasibility Study is submitted to INSTRAW in advance

of our Final Report. We are available to discuss our findings and recommendations with you and your colleagues at your convenience.

Respectfully submitted:

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Lynne Gallagher, President

Telecom/Telematique Inc.

March 13, 2000

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